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PC.DEL/362/26  
23 April 2026

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. DMITRY POLYANSKIY, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1561st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 April 2026

**Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Genocide of the Soviet People Perpetrated  
by the Nazis and their Collaborators during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 19 April, the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Genocide of the Soviet People Perpetrated by the Nazis and their Collaborators during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 was observed in our country for the first time. It was established by law at the end of 2025, with the relevant Federal Act entering into force on 1 January 2026.

For us, this is not just another memorable date. It is a response to the increasingly aggressive attempts to distort the historical truth, to downplay the scale of Nazi atrocities committed on the territory of the Soviet Union and, ultimately, to revise the outcome of the Second World War.

The choice of 19 April is no coincidence. For it was on that very day in 1943 that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued Decree No. 39, “On punitive measures for German-fascist villains guilty of killing and torturing Soviet civilians and captured Red Army soldiers, for spies and traitors to the Motherland from the ranks of Soviet citizens, and for their accomplices”. This decree served as the key legal basis for wide-ranging efforts to identify, investigate and punish those responsible for the mass extermination of the civilian population in occupied areas of the Soviet Union.

We would remind you that the Nazi leadership regarded the territory of the Soviet Union stretching all the way to the Urals as its Lebensraum, which was earmarked for settlement by members of the “Aryan race”. Consequently, these lands were to be cleansed of those whom Hitlerite ideology had declared to be “subhuman”: Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews and members of other peoples of the Soviet Union.

It is also important to note that the enemy made no secret of the nature of its war. As early as 16 September 1941, an order issued by Field Marshal Keitel, Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command, effectively instructed German troops to show no mercy to civilians. In other words, this was not a random surge in violence, but a deliberate war of annihilation and a large-scale colonial reshaping of geographical space on the basis of racial ideology.

A key element of this programme was a strategy of organized starvation. It was envisaged that such a strategy would claim the lives of up to 30 million Soviet citizens already in the winter of 1941–1942. That plan failed to be implemented in full. However, just in terms of what was actually put into practice, the consequences were horrific – at least 5 million people fell victim to a deliberately orchestrated famine. The total number of civilians who died as a result of the Nazis’ atrocities in occupied areas was as high as 18 million. Overall, the losses suffered by the Soviet people add up to the inconceivable figure of 27 million individuals.

This is not a matter of “costs of war”. Nor “wartime excesses”. Nor “a tragedy common to all sides in the conflict”, as the West is trying to convince us today.

It was a system. A conscious, ideologically motivated and centrally organized system of extermination. The first trials, in particular those held in Krasnodar and Kharkov, played a crucial role in the legal assessment of that system. Their outcomes subsequently influenced the work of the Nuremberg Tribunal. The evidence and legal evaluations presented there made it possible to speak of the genocide of peoples in the territories occupied by the Germans, primarily the territory of the Soviet Union.

Archival documents that continue to be published to this day are of particular significance. These include materials from units and formations of the 1st Byelorussian Front, the 1st Ukrainian Front, the 60th and 65th Armies, reports from members of the military councils of the fronts to the *Stavka* (headquarters) of the Supreme High Command, interviews with liberated prisoners of war, testimonies from survivors, interrogations of Nazis and their collaborators, and reports of crimes committed in the death camps of Sobibor, Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek and in prisoner-of-war camps.

Suffice it to recall a report dated 30 July 1944 on atrocities committed at the Sobibor death camp, compiled by a group of Soviet officers led by Captain Turayev. The document records, in the words of a witness, how the bodies of those killed were piled up, doused with fuel and set aflame. These bonfires burned for days. The stench of burning human bodies spread over many kilometres. The Germans later also exterminated those Jews whom they had been using to run this “factory of death”, and then razed the camp to the ground and had the site ploughed over and planted with trees, in an attempt to cover up the traces of their crimes. This is exactly what the Nazi death machine looked like in practice.

Accomplices in the form of collaborators also actively assisted Hitler’s Germany in the extermination of Soviet citizens. The archival materials contain, in particular, evidence of atrocities committed by Stepan Bandera’s followers. For example, a political report by the head of the political department of the Ternopol Regional Military Commissariat of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic dated 5 November 1945 documents acts of terrorism, the murdering of local officials and village activists, the looting of co-operative shops and peasant households, and intimidation of the population. In one instance, the secretary of a village council was killed for having been the first in the village to meet the grain procurement quota. In another incident, thugs executed three young women – who worked, respectively, at a milk collection point, as a postwoman and as a canteen cleaner – after subjecting them to abuse and torture.

This is a not insignificant part of the historical truth that people are now deliberately trying to erase. We would emphasize, in particular, that the commission of genocide on the territory of the former USSR has been confirmed by the courts in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation in which the German Nazis and their accomplices committed crimes against the civilian population during the Great Patriotic War. This work is being continued by the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation. At the same time, criminal liability applies in Russia for the rehabilitation of Nazism, including acts that desecrate the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Genocide of the Soviet People. In addition, further measures have been introduced to hold individuals accountable for denying or condoning

the genocide of the Soviet people, for defiling the memory of its victims and for desecrating their burial sites on the territory of the Russian Federation or beyond its borders.

Mr. Chairperson,

In this connection, we cannot fail to mention another extremely worrying trend. There is an ever-growing tendency in Germany nowadays to shrug off the burden of responsibility for the crimes committed by the Nazis on Soviet territory. This is no longer a matter of isolated slips of the tongue or chance remarks. We are witnessing a veritable campaign aimed at downplaying the scale of the Third Reich's infamies and blurring their systematic and premeditated nature.

An array of political, expert, remembrance and ideological mechanisms are geared towards that end, having been tasked not so much with preserving memory as with rejigging it in a manner that suits the authorities in Berlin. We are, in effect, being asked to pretend that there was no policy of extermination, planned well in advance, no racial doctrine, no strategy of organized starvation, no death camps, no wholesale annihilation of Slavs, Jews and Roma, no mass extermination of Soviet prisoners of war, no forced abortions for young Soviet women conscripted for slave labour in Germany as *Ostarbeiter*, and much else besides.

However, no matter how hard Germany and the West as a whole may try to downplay the scale of the tragedy, cover up the Nazis' criminal intent and avoid explicit legal definitions, Russia will continue to work to ensure that the crimes committed by the Nazis and their henchmen against the citizens of the Soviet Union are recognized by the international community as genocide against the Soviet people. An assessment to that effect is already enshrined in a number of documents adopted within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. We will do so at all international platforms, including the United Nations and the OSCE, drawing on archival documents, court rulings, material from the Nuremberg trials and the norms of international law.

We would point out that detailed information on this topic is available from public Russian sources. For example, there is a special section on the genocide of the Soviet people on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website (<https://clck.ru/3TFD2g>); there is the "Routes of Memory" project dealing with the sites of Nazi war crimes; there are dossiers compiled by the Russian Military Historical Society and the Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defence (<https://clck.ru/3TFD7N>) on the liberation of concentration camp prisoners and on documentation of the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their accomplices.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, let us once again call things by their real names. When we are asked to "not politicize history", it usually means only one thing: what is wanted from us is that we put up with a historical amnesia all too convenient for some. However, we will never agree to that. Because it is not just about the past. Where the memory of genocide is erased, a fertile ground soon emerges for new forms of dehumanization, for the justification of racial superiority and for a new wave of glorification of executioners and their willing assistants. The Russian Federation will firmly oppose any attempts to rehabilitate Nazism, glorify collaborators, deny the fact of genocide, defile the memory of its victims, or revise the outcome of the Second World War.

Thank you for your attention.